



Writing-Intensive Courses: Embedding Writing Meaningfully and Intentionally into Your Course

An Introduction to WIDAC's *Writing Fellows Program*

Presenters: Nina Brown
David Maylish
Jennifer Pemberton

Introductions



How can WIDAC help YOU to incorporate writing-intensive practices into your courses?

Through the **Writing Fellows Program...**



What are Writing-Intensive Courses?

- WI courses are a high-impact teaching and learning practice that have been widely tested and shown to have a positive impact on student success.
- WI courses use writing as a tool for learning about course content.
- WI courses introduce students to the writing practices used in specific academic disciplines.

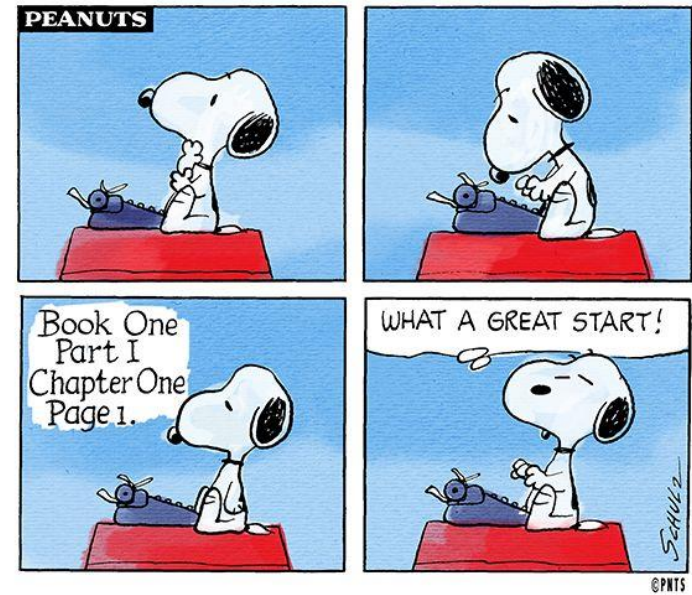


What Writing-Intensive Courses Are NOT...

- Composition courses
- Courses that simply include a lot of assigned writing
- WI courses are more about...

PROCESS

than CONTENT

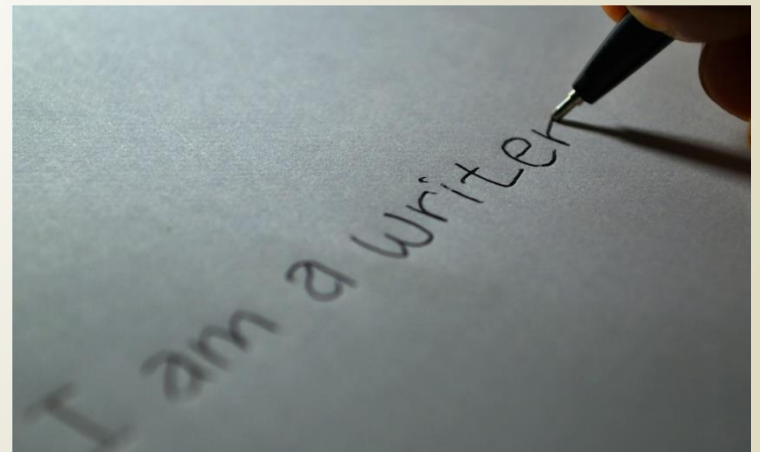


Why is meaningful writing so important?

- In an analysis of approximately 2,100 writing assignments given in 100 undergraduate courses across disciplines at 100 schools, Melzer (2009) found that **approximately 2/3 were addressed to the teacher-as-examiner; nearly 1/4 were short-answer exam questions.**
- Writing-to-learn theorists view “the dominance of informative writing and the lack of persuasive, expressive, and poetic writing... as evidence of the limited uses teachers across disciplines make of writing, and of the continued need for WAC practitioners to bring writing-to-learn approaches to the disciplines” (p. 246).

Why is meaningful writing so important?

- Anderson, Anson, Gonyea, and Paine (2016) found that the proliferation of informational writing assignments are **“not likely to engage students in deeper forms of critical analysis or dialogic explorations of challenging subject matter, but instead to have them render correct answers in simplistic prose”** (p. 5)



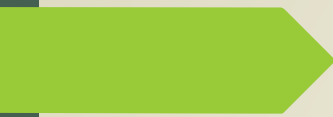
Therefore, it is imperative that teachers of writing include:

- **Interactive writing processes** – writers communicate orally or in writing with instructor, peer, classmate, friend, writing center staff, etc.
- **Meaning-making writing tasks** – students engage in some form of integrative, critical, or original thinking, e.g. asking student to apply a concept to past experience, relate to a policy, etc.
- **Clear writing expectations** – instructors provide students with an accurate understanding of what they are asking the students to demonstrate in an assignment and the criteria by which the instructors will evaluate the students' submissions
- **Low-stakes writing assignments (ungraded or only a small portion of the overall course grade)** - support meaning-making; the goal of these assignments is learning



Writing-Intensive Courses: What's Included?

- The course syllabus identifies the class as a writing-intensive section and defines expectations for students.
- Writing assignments are connected to the course objectives and learning outcomes.
- Multiple, varied writing assignments are given throughout the semester with the goal of seeking an overall improvement in the students' writing.
- Writing assignments include informal (low stakes) exercises as well as more formal assignments.
- Writing instruction must be given in the course. Students should learn how to write in the style, modes, or forms appropriate to the discipline.



Writing-Intensive Courses: What's Included?

- Instructor provides timely feedback to the student in both written and spoken forms.
- Rubrics or similar documents are used to guide the writing process and explain how the writing will be evaluated.
- Written work is subject to the writing process: pre-draft, rough draft, revision, final draft.
- Peer evaluation and feedback are part of the revision stage of the writing process.
- Students are permitted to re-write at least one process-driven paper during the course.
- A significant portion of the students' final grade should be a product of the students' level of quality writing.



The Syllabus

- ▶ "NOTE: CRN Number, [Course Information including abbreviation and title goes here] is a writing-intensive version of [course name again goes here]. A writing-intensive section employs writing as a tool for thinking about course content critically, introduces students to writing in the course academic discipline/field, and features a variety of writing assignments in several settings."

Sample:

NOTE: ANTH 101, Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, (CRN 90153) is a writing-focused course, which means that we will use writing as a tool for thinking critically about the course topics and will examine the ways in which social scientists use research and writing to communicate about their work. There will be variety of assignments with a writing component, and you will have opportunities to revise and improve your research and writing skills.

The Importance of Clear and Specific Writing Assignment Directions

- What suggestions would you make to improve these sample writing assignment directions?



The Writing Process



Scoring Tools

- **Analytic Rubrics** (numerical)
 - Facilitates weighting of elements (e.g., more emphasis on content than on spelling)
 - Provides students specific feedback
 - Trains/assesses students on specific elements of content or process
- **Holistic Rubrics** (overall grade – e.g., “A,” “B,” etc.)
 - Faster grading for instructor
 - For times when very detailed feedback not needed (e.g., final paper)
 - For assignments assessing creativity or overall product
- **Scoring tools may also include:** Checklists, Rating Scales



Types of Writing Assignments



Analysis of Book Review

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Annotation

Application essays

BOOK REPORT

Book/Article Review

Case Study

Comparison Paper

Contextual Analysis/Solution

Critical Persona Paper

Definition Paper

Double-entry Journal

Essay Exam

Field Report

Glossary

Group Project Report

Journal

Lab Report

Letter to the Editor

“Missing” Chapter or Paragraph Paper

Newspaper Commentary Paper

Note-Taking

Performance/Exhibit Review

Position Paper

Process Paper

Professional Article

Reflective Paper

Research Paper

Response/Reaction Paper

Review of the Literature

Summaries

Timed Short Paper

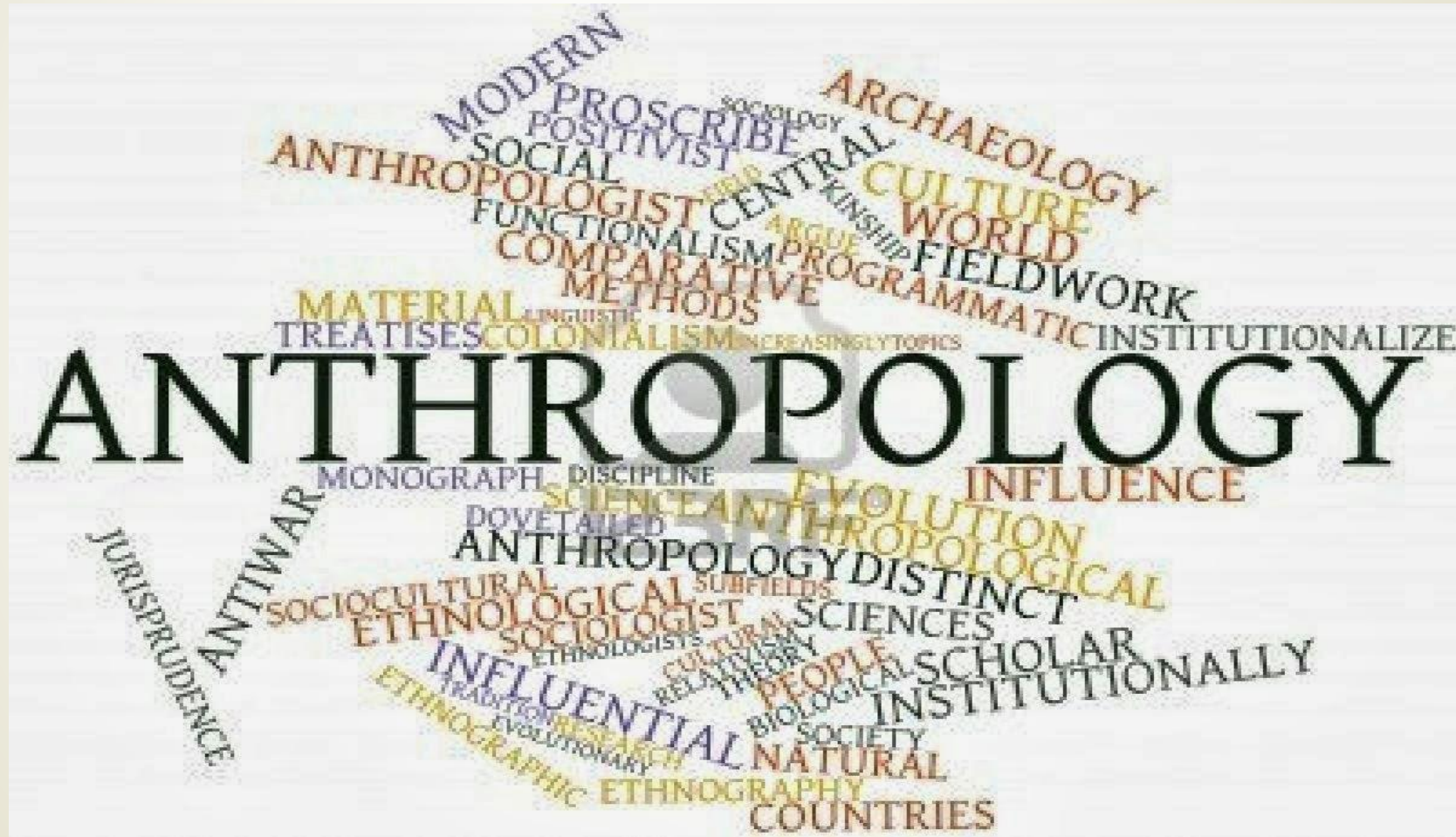
“Translation” Paper

WEB CHAT

Website Review

“What are the Issues?” Paper

An Example: Introduction to Cultural Anthropology



Discussion



How do you see writing-intensive practices working in your courses?



References



- ▶ Anderson, P., Anson, C. M., Gonyea, R. M., & Paine, C. (2016). How to create high-impact writing assignments that enhance learning and development and reinvigorate WAC/WID programs: What almost 72,000 undergraduates taught us. *Across the Disciplines*, (13)4, 1-17.
- ▶ Melzer, D. (2009). Writing assignments across the curriculum: A national study of college writing. *College Composition and Communication*, v61 n2 pW240-W261.